

The Address—Mr. J. Clark

party. Well, Mr. Speaker, my lament is not for Canada; I have sufficient confidence in the strength of the people of this country to believe that they can survive even this government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: I must say that, difficult though it is, I am able to restrain my sorrow for the state of the Liberal party. My lament instead, Sir, is for a Prime Minister and for a government that have become so isolated, so divorced from reality, that they cannot even hear let alone respond to the message of Canadians. My lament is that we have to suffer through this total lack of leadership for another two years until the Prime Minister gives the people of Canada a chance to make a fresh start.

I found, Mr. Speaker, as I am sure many other Canadians did, a particular significance in the words "operation justification". Because that indicates that this government does not believe that there is anything wrong with the substance of its policies. Its members are prepared to go out and not question those policies to justify them. They believe the only problem is with the perception of those policies. In other words, it is not the government that is at fault, it is the people of Canada who are at fault.

There is no intention evidenced, either in the outpourings in Toronto or in the carefully empty speech of yesterday, of any change in the substance of the policies; the government is merely trying to cajole Canadians to change the nature of their response to policies that are clearly inadequate to the requirements of modern Canada. There is no program. There are simply to be public relations on the part of the government in the remaining months of its mandate, and unfortunately that emphasis on public relations began in the throne speech that we received yesterday.

An hon. Member: You are sterile.

Mr. Clark: I hear that word from an expert.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

● (1520)

Mr. Clark: I think that no one reading the Speech from the Throne of yesterday could fail to be overcome by the boldness, initiative, and imagination that were evident in that speech! The government, among other bright initiatives, is prepared to give "very high priority to the promotion of better understanding among Canadians". There is a government with courage, boldness and foresight.

Then carrying on in that same tradition the government is prepared, and prepared absolutely and fearlessly, to review what federal programs might be transferred to the private sector. It is going to be a fearless and courageous review.

Then the government is sneaking up finally on the question of freedom of information, that question raised by my colleague, the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin), in a way that does singular credit to him and to this House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Mr. Clark.]

Mr. Clark: That is a question which I had concluded had now become safe to discuss in Canada because it is a cause even being promoted by the former minister of finance.

An hon. Member: A former minister of finance.

Mr. Clark: Yes, a former minister of finance. I assumed that the former minister, the former hon. member for Ottawa-Carleton (Mr. Turner), was simply repeating before a public forum a recommendation in the direction of greater freedom of information that he made so vigorously to his colleagues in Cabinet during the long time when he had some influence over the affairs of the country.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark: We had thought that at least this was a safe question on which initiative might be taken, but we found that, instead of bringing forward legislation, what the government is going to do is once again have another green paper, another study as to whether or not it is safe to trust the people of Canada with information about Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: Having said all that, Mr. Speaker, it is clear that there was nowhere where the government was more forthcoming or more courageous than when it faced up to the thorny problem of its proper role in the Canadian economy. The choices before the government were very difficult. On the one hand, and I apologize for paraphrasing it, there were strong forces demanding more intervention, as in the assertion which I want to quote:

The end is a free society of men and women and children . . . and free collective bargaining and the free enterprise system are some tools we have devised to reach that goal. But they're just tools and if they don't provide the right results, we'll curtail a little bit of collective bargaining or the market place free market system—

Against that position were raised equally strong voices supporting the private sector, as in this statement:

Our strongest and most promising asset is the spirit of the people of Canada, our willingness to tackle difficult challenges head-on, our tradition of self-reliance, responsibility and individual initiative.

What a choice for the government to have to make. Imagine the agony of having to choose between Pierre Elliott Trudeau of April and Pierre Elliott Trudeau of October.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: Imagine the dilemma of a government having to choose between its Prime Minister and its Prime Minister.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark: It did so with the ingenuity that has become the hallmark of modern Liberalism. The government made its choice and came down four square with Keith Davey.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!